

# DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL,

FOR THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

VOL. 1.] PROMOTE, AS AN OBJECT OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE, INSTITUTIONS FOR THE GENERAL DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE.—WASHINGTON. [NO. 2.

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## DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL.

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY  
FRANCIS DWIGHT.

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S DECISIONS.

*When a certificate of qualification expires during the term for which a teacher is engaged, it must be renewed before he can receive any portion of the public money.*

In reference to the decision of Mr. Flagg in the case of Clifton Park, page 92 of decisions, I think it should receive this qualification, that where the certificate expires during the term for which a teacher is engaged, he must procure a renewal of it from the Inspectors, before any money can be paid to him.—The certificate is limited in its duration for the purpose of subjecting the teacher to a further examination, and particularly to ascertain whether his moral qualifications remain as they were. The allowing a certificate to expire, is therefore *prima facie* evidence of its being annulled, as that is one mode of doing it. This presumption should in all cases be rebutted by the production of a new certificate or the renewal of the old one, before any money is paid to the teacher holding such expired certificates.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. February 16, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER.

*Contracts by trustees with teachers relative to the payment of their wages, should be in accordance with the provisions of law. The public money applicable to the payment of teachers' wages cannot either directly or indirectly be applied to any other purpose.*

In the matter of the appeal of Harriet Veeder, from the refusal of the Trustees of District No. 8, in the City of Albany, to pay her the full amount of her wages as a teacher, and the contingent expenses of her school.

It would seem from the representatives of the parties, that Mrs. Veeder was engaged as a teacher for District No. 8, for one year, until the first of January, 1839, and it does not seem to be disputed that she is entitled to receive for teachers' wages, the sum of \$473 18. It is alleged on the part of the District, that Mrs. Veeder will be indebted to them on the first of May next, for the rent of a room which she has occupied since January last, and which she agreed to pay; and they claim the right to set off the amount of the rent and deduct it from her wages. As a general principle, I am disposed to discourage all bargains and arrangements with teachers for a different mode of paying their wages, than that prescribed by law. The statute makes it the duty of the Trustees to pay to teachers the public money they receive, and they can apply it to no other purpose. If in the present instance, they should apply any given sum, say \$20, to the payment of a debt of Mrs. Veeder to any third person for the rent of a room without her assent, they could not truly report at the end of the year that they had paid the public money received by them to a qualified teacher, for a payment to another without her directions, is not a payment to her; and I do not perceive how the case is varied by its being a debt to the Trustees or the District, instead of a third person. I foresee infinite difficulty in sanctioning such arrangements from the relative positions of the parties, and am convinced that the interests of districts and of the Common School system require that the law should in all cases be rigidly adhered to, and that the public money intended to be applied to the wages of a teacher should be paid to such teachers, or to his order, and in no other way.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. April 23, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER.

## Duty of Inspectors in Examination of Teachers.

The examination of candidates for teachers, should in all cases be thorough and strict; and no certificate should be given unless the Inspectors are satisfied as to all the qualifications required by law. The certificate cannot be given for any particular district, but when given it authorizes the teachers to teach in any school in the town during the year. The standard of qualification should be the same in all the schools; and if a proper arrangement of School Districts throughout the town is made by the Commissioners, with the aid of the large amount of public money now distributed, there can be no very great difficulty in maintaining good Schools at least for four months in each year, if the inhabitants are disposed to do so.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. June 4, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER.

*No particular number of inhabitants are required to be in attendance at an annual or special meeting duly notified, to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.*

In the appeal of Robert Stewart, Junius Treat and Benjamin Carpenter, former Trustees of joint district No. 9 in Erie, and No. 12 in Elmira.

The annual meeting for 1839 was duly notified by the district clerk, and held at the proper time and place appointed at the preceding annual meeting.—The appellants allege that it was attended by only three persons, who were not legal voters; that they were not freeholders, and had not been assessed in the district the preceding year. The answer states that the meeting was attended by the district clerk and two others, all of whom have been residents of the district for three years and been assessed to work on highways and paid their assessment, and two of them have been assessed for county and town taxes. The proceedings of the meeting appear to have been perfectly regular.

The law has not specified what number shall constitute a district meeting; and where the notice has been fair and public, and the meeting held at the proper time and place, I know of no authority the Superintendent has to supply what the law has omitted. It was the fault of the other electors that they did not attend.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. October 22, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER.

*The entire dissolution of a district is not an alteration of such district, within the meaning of the law.*

In my opinion the total destruction of a School District is not legally an *alteration*. That term implies that something of the original remains. The two houses of the Legislature have repeatedly so held, upon the construction of similar language in the constitution. By that instrument it is provided that the assent of two-thirds of the members elected to each branch of the Legislature shall be requisite to every appropriation of public monies or property for local or private purposes, or creating, continuing, altering or renewing any body politic or corporation. Sec. 9, Art. VIII. Under this provision the Legislature has *repeated* acts of incorporation by a mere majority of all the members present; and this has been done upon discussion and deliberation in the reports of committees, and the ground assumed was that the *total destruction* of corporations by a repeal of their charters was not an *alteration*, and such repeal did not come within the *spirit* of the provision any more than it did within its *letter*. In this conclusion I concur. The policy of suspending the effect of an *alteration* for three months, when no consent has been given, is not applicable to a dissolution. In the former case alterations may be made for the mere purpose of avoiding a tax, and the law has therefore enabled the Trustees to interpose a veto. I cannot conceive of any reason for suspending the effect of an order of dissolution. Still the Trustees must consider this but an opinion, which the courts may overrule. If the persons taxed appeal, I can then

make a *decision* that will be final. Perhaps those complaining may be induced to take this course.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. July 26, 1839. JOHN C. SPENCER.

*The provision of law requiring notice to be given by trustees upon an assessment, does not apply to every case of departure from the last assessment roll of the town: but to those cases only where an alteration in the valuation of the assessors becomes necessary.*

B., an inhabitant of District No. 15 in Onondaga, had, since the last assessment roll was completed, removed from one part of his farm to another, so as to become taxable for the whole farm in an adjoining district. The trustees of No. 15 therefore omitted to include his name in the tax-list of that district; and applied to the Superintendent for instructions as to whether this was such a *departure* from the last assessment roll, as to render it necessary to give notice of their assessment.

The provision of law requiring notice of assessment does not apply to this case. It does not mean every case of departure from the town assessment; but refers to those only where an assessment is actually made upon an inhabitant, upon a valuation different from that in the town roll. Here no different valuation is made. Certain property was properly omitted to be assessed; no new property was brought into the tax-list, and no notice was necessary, the Trustees can call a special meeting by their own authority.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. Dec. 13, 1839. JOHN C. SPENCER.

*Associations formed under the General Banking Law cannot be taxed as corporations. They are to be regarded as limited partnerships only: and the individual property of the partners, real and personal, taxed as in other cases.*

I have heretofore held in reply to a communication addressed to me from another source on the same subject, that the Associations formed under the General Banking Law, are not corporations, and are therefore not liable to taxation in that capacity. My opinion is that they can only be regarded as limited partnerships, and the property of the partners taxed as in other cases, i. e. real and personal property to the residents of the districts only for such real estate as is cultivated and improved by them in the district, &c.

I suppose the question to be still an open one in the courts: the late opinion of the Supreme Court having, as it is understood, been removed to the Court for the Correction of Errors, and not yet definitely passed upon.\* The safer course will undoubtedly be, to refrain from taxing such Associations in their corporate capacity. A final decision, however, upon this point, so far as this department is concerned, can only be had upon a formal appeal.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. Jan. 29, 1840. JOHN C. SPENCER.

\* The Court for the Correction of Errors have recently decided that these Associations are not corporations, within the meaning of the Constitution requiring the concurrence of two-thirds of the members elected to each branch of the Legislature, to the Act authorizing their Association. This decision is supposed to sanction the principle laid down by the Superintendent in the above case.

*Three inspectors must meet and examine a candidate for examination as a teacher, and must sign his certificate, to give it validity. Such certificate must be dated at the time it is given. Where inspectors neglect their duty, the remedy is by indictment.*

In answer to your communication of the 7th inst., addressed to my predecessor, I have to say that a certificate must be signed by three Inspectors, who must together examine the teacher, and that it is irregular and improper to date back a certificate or give it any other date than that of the day when it was actually signed.

If the Inspectors of the town of Pittstown neglect their duty, the only remedy is by indictment.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. Feb. 12, 1839. JOHN C. SPENCER.

## STATE REPORTS ON EDUCATION.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.  
(CONTINUED.)

## II. The Expenditure of the School Moneys.

The following sums were raised during the year 1838, for the support of common schools, applicable only to the payment of teachers' wages, viz:

Appropriated by the State,	\$110,000 00
Raised by the Counties,	110,000 00
From permanent town funds,	19,725 76
Under special statutes, in New-York,	72,651 00
do. in Albany,	3,556 40
do. in Brooklyn,	2,045 46
do. in Buffalo,	451 37
Voluntarily raised by taxes,	55,981 62

Whole sum raised, 374,411 61  
The amount raised in 1837, was 335,892 92

Showing an increase of \$38,528 69  
The trustees of school districts received in 1838, and applied to the payment of teachers' wages, the above sum of \$374,411 61

The amount paid by individuals during the same year, was \$521,477 49

exceeding the amount so paid in 1837 by \$43,603 22.

The total amount of expenditures of school moneys reported, is \$895,889 10

In order to ascertain the actual expense of maintaining the common schools, the following estimated amounts should be added to the above, viz:

1. Interest on money invested in school houses, which is obtained by allowing \$200 as the average cost of a school-house, that is, one for each of the 10,127 reporting districts, which gives a principal of \$2,025,400, which at 6 per cent produces the amount stated,	\$121,524 00
2. Annual expense of books, slate and stationery, for 559,229 scholars, at \$1 each,	557,229 00
3. Fuel for 10,127 school-houses, at \$10 each,	101,270 00
4. Fees of collectors on the amount raised by tax, \$244,685 85,	6,117 14
5. Fees for collecting rate-bills, \$521,477 49, at 5 per cent, the sum allowed by law,	26,073 85
6. Repairs of school-houses, \$5 for each,	50,625 00
7. Compensation to Commissioners of Common Schools, who are allowed \$1 for each day, 3 commissioners for each of the 823 towns, exclusive of cities, and allowing 5 days service during the year to each,	12,345 00
8. Compensation voted to inspectors of common schools in the several towns, And the total annual expense of maintaining the Common Schools of the State in 1838, was at least	11,000 00

Dividing the above sum by 557,229, the number of children who attended school, gives an average of \$3.20 as the cost of instruction for each child. The average cost of instruction in 1837, was estimated at \$84. That estimate was formed on different principles, as will be seen by comparing it with the above.

The average compensation of teachers during the year, estimated as has been usual, is \$11,05 per month for eight months; and supposing females employed one-half of the time, at \$5.50 per month, the wages of male teachers would be at \$16,60 per month.

The gradual increase of the rate of teachers' wages for several years past is shown by the following table:

In 1831, the rate was \$11 85 per month.	
1832, " " 12 22 "	
1834, " " 12 70 "	
1835, " " 12 90 "	
1837, " " 13 93 "	
1838, " " 16 60 "	

## III. The Capital of the School Fund.

This consists of two classes:

1. The unproductive property belonging to it; and
2. The loans and other investments yielding an income, including the money in the treasury.

The first class comprises the public lands appropriated to the support of schools and remaining unsold, amounting to 423,729 acres, and their value as derived from appraisals and estimates is \$190,809 75.

The productive capital of the school fund on the 30th of September, 1839, amounted to \$1,932,421 99, and consisted of the following items:

Bonds for land sold,	\$1,047,055 80
Bonds for loans,	326,613 63
Remaining due of loan of 1786,	2,815 12
do. do. of 1792,	138,401 74
do. do. of 1808,	223,065 22
Bank stock,	102,300 00
Stock of the State,	21,755 91
U. S. Treasury Notes,	3,000 00
Money in the Treasury,	67,414 57

\$1,932,421 99

During the fiscal year ending 30th September, 1838, "the income" of \$4,014,520 71 deposited by the United States, yielded a "residue," after paying the charges created by chapter 237, of laws of 1838, and which has been transferred to the capital of the school fund, amounting to \$45,647 64; making the present capital of the fund, \$1,978,069 63, which is \$48,362 12 more than the preceding year.

This addition from the income of the U. S. Deposite Fund, is much less than what was stated as its amount in the last annual reports of the Superintendent and Comptroller. The reason of the difference will be explained in the remarks in a subsequent part of this report. Of the sum in the Treasury on the 30th September last, above stated to be \$67,414 57 There has since been invested \$33,000 00

Leaving 34,414 57 To which add amount received from the income of the U. S. deposite fund, 45,647 64

Shows now remaining in the Treasury, \$80,062 21

There was necessarily left in the treasury a considerable sum to be loaned, as directed by acts of the Legislature at its last session. But many of those loans have not been applied for. No opportunities that were deemed desirable for such investments as are authorized by law, were presented, and the provision authorizing loans through the county commissioners was so imperfect and vague that it was not deemed safe to employ them. The Superintendent concurs in the recommendations of the Comptroller on this subject, contained in his annual report of the 13th of January last.

For all practical purposes there should be an addition to the above capital, of a sum equal to that portion of the principal of the U. S. Deposite Fund, which furnishes the income appropriated by law for the common schools \$110,000, and to district libraries \$55,000, making \$165,000, to supply which, at 6 per cent, requires a principal of \$2,750,000. As there is little probability that the principal of this deposite will ever be recalled, it is proper, at all events, while it remains, in order to have a correct practical view of the financial condition of the Common School Fund, to add to the present pro-

ductive capital above stated at \$1,988,069 63 the above from the U. S. Deposite Fund, 2,750,000 00

Making present productive capital, \$4,738,069 63

Besides which there is appropriated to the capital of the School Fund the residue of the income of the U. S. Deposite Fund, not appropriated to other objects. This residue, calculating the fund to produce 6 1-2 per cent, is \$51,270 13, annually, and in the year 1845 it will have added to the capital of the School Fund, 256,850 13

Making it \$4,994,919 76 which will, by that time, be increased by the sales of lands and other sources, so as to make it exceed *five millions* of dollars.

The Superintendent doubts whether this capital needs any further provision for its enlargement. While public beneficence is bestowed in such a degree as to stimulate individual enterprise, it performs its proper office. When it exceeds that limit, it tempts to reliance upon its aid, and necessarily relaxes the exertions of those who receive it. The spirit of our institutions is hostile to such dependence: it requires that the citizens should exercise a constant vigilance over their own institutions as the surest means of preserving them. A direct pecuniary contribution to the maintenance of schools identifies them with the feelings of the people, and secures their faithful and economical management. A reference to the condition of the free schools and other institutions of learning in England, which have been overloaded by endowments, will exhibit not only the jobbing peculation which has perverted them from the noble objects for which they were designed, but will show that where the government and wealthy individuals have contributed the most, the people have done the least, either in money or effort; and that, instead of being nurseries of instruction for the whole, they have been almost exclusively appropriated to the benefit of the few. The consequence has been that, while some most accomplished scholars have been produced, the education of the mass has been neglected. These schools were not of *the people*: they did not establish them, nor did they contribute to their support; and of course they regarded them as things in which they had little or no interest.

In the State of Connecticut, the large endowment of the public schools produced lassitude and neglect, and in many instances the funds were perverted to other purposes to such an extent that an entire change in the system became necessary. Free schools partake so much of the nature of charitable institutions, that those who can possibly afford to educate their children at select schools will do so in preference to sending them to the district schools for gratuitous instruction; and thus a practical distinction would be created between the children of the republic, hostile to the spirit of our government, and inimical to those just feelings of equality among all our citizens which constitute genuine republicanism. In the cities, where there are large numbers who would not be instructed at all if free schools were not provided, the evil must be encountered, as being less in degree than that of total ignorance. But in the country districts such destitution rarely exists, and when it does, provision is made by law for gratuitous instruction in each particular case.

[To be continued in future numbers.]

## LIGHT READING.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MASSACHUSETTS.

CONTINUED.

"Of works, unfolding to us the structure of our own bodies, and the means of preserving health, and of the constitution of our own minds, and the infinite diversity of the spiritual paths, which the mind can traverse, each bringing after it, its own peculiar consequences,—of works, laying open the complicated relations of society, illustrative of the general duties belonging to all, and of the special duties, arising from special positions;—of works, making us acquainted with the beneficent laws and properties of nature and their adaptations to supply our needs and enhance our welfare,—of works of these descriptions, editions of a few hundred copies only are printed, and then the types are distributed, in despair of any further demand; while of fictitious works, thousands of copies are thrown off at first, and they are stereotyped in confidence that the insatiable public will call for new supplies. It was but a few years after the publication of Sir Walter's Poems and Novels, that fifty thousand copies of many of them had been sold in Great Britain alone. Under the stimulus which he applied to the public imagination, the practice of novel reading has grown to such extent, that his imitators and copyists have overspread a still wider field, and covered it to a greater depth. In this country, the reading of novels has been still more epidemic, because, in most parts of it, so great a portion of the people can read, and because, owing to the extensiveness of the demand, they have been afforded so cheaply, that the price of a perusal has often been less than the value of the light by which they were read.

"To give some idea of the difference in the sales of different kinds of works, it may be stated, that of some of Bulwer's and Marryati's novels, from ten to fifteen thousand copies have been sold in this country; while of that highly valuable and instructive work, Sparks's American Biography, less than two thousand copies, on an average, have been sold; and of Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, only about thirty-six hundred. The latter is considered a remarkably large sale, and is owing, in no inconsiderable degree, to the superior manner in which that interesting history was written.

"No discerning person, who has arrived at middle age, and has been at all conversant with society, can have failed to remark the effect upon mind and character, of reading frivolous books, when pursued as a regular mental employment, and not as an occasional recreation;—the lowered tone of the faculties, the irregular sallies of feeling, the want of a power of continuous thought on the same subject, and the imperfect views taken of all practical questions,—an imperfection compounded by including things not belonging to the subject, and by omitting things which do. Any such person will be able to give his attestation to the fact and be willing to advance it into an axiom, that *light reading makes light minds*.

"So far as it respects fictitious writings, the explanation of their weakening and dispersive influence, is palpable to the feeblest

comprehension. All men must recognize the wide distinction between *intellect* and *feeling*,—between *ideas* and *emotions*. These two classes of mental operations are inherently distinct from each other in their nature; they are called into activity by different classes of objects; they are cultivated by different processes, and as the one or the other predominates in the mental constitution, widely different results follow both in conduct and character. All sciences are the offspring of the intellect. On the other hand, there cannot be poetry or eloquence without emotion. From the intellect come order, demonstration, invention, discovery; from the feelings,—enthusiasm, pathos, and sublime sentiments in morals and religion. The attainments of the greatest intellect are gathered with comparative slowness, but each addition is a permanent one. The process resembles that by which material structures are reared, which are laboriously built up, brick by brick, or stone by stone, but when once erected, are steadfast and enduring.—But the feelings, on the other hand, are like the unstable elements of the air or ocean, which are suddenly roused from a state of tranquility into vehement commotion, and as suddenly subside into repose. When rhetoricians endeavor to excite more vivid conceptions of truth, by means of sensible images, they liken the productions of the intellect to the solidity and stern repose of time-defying pyramid or temple; but they find symbols for the feelings and passions of men in the atmosphere, which obeys the slightest impulse and is ready to start into whirlwinds or tempests, at once. To add to the stock of practical knowledge and to increase intellectual ability, requires voluntary and long-sustained effort; but feelings and impulses are often spontaneous, and always susceptible of being roused into action by a mere glance of the eye, or the sound of a voice. To become master of an exact, coherent, full set, or complement of ideas, on any important subject, demands fixed attention, patience, study; but emotions or passions flash up suddenly, and while they blaze, they are consumed. In the mechanical and useful arts, for instance, a knowledge of the structure and quality of materials, of the weight and motive power of fluids, of the laws of gravitation, and their action upon bodies in a state of motion or rest, is acquired by the engineer, the artisan, the machinist,—not by sudden intuition, but by months and years, of steady application. Arithmetic, or the science of numbers; geometry, or the science of quantities; astronomy, and the uses of astronomical knowledge in navigation, must all have been profoundly studied,—the almost innumerable ideas, which form these vast sciences, must have been discovered and brought together, one by one,—before any mariner could leave a port on this side of the globe, and strike, without failure, the smallest town or river, on the opposite side of it. And the same principle is no less true in regard to jurisprudence, to legislation, and to all parts of social economy, so far as they are worthy to be called sciences. But that part of the train of our mental operations, which we call the emotions or the affections;—those powers of our spiritual constitution, denominated the propensities and

sentiments, which give birth to appetite, hope, fear, grief, love, shame, pride, at the very first, produce a feeling, which is perfect or complete, of its kind. An infant cannot reason, but may experience as perfect an emotion of fear, as an adult. Mankind, for thousands of years, have been advancing in the attainments of intellect, but the fathers of the race had feelings, as electric and impetuous, as any of their latest descendants. In every intellectual department, therefore, there must be accurate observation in collecting the elementary ideas,—these ideas must be compared, arranged, methodized, in the mind,—each faculty, which has cognizance of the subject, taking them up individually, and, as it were, handling, assorting, measuring, weighing them, until each one is marked at its true value and arranged in its right place, so that they may stand ready to be reproduced, and to be embodied in any outward fabric or institution, in any work of legislation or philosophy, which their possessor may afterwards wish to construct. Such intellectual processes must have been performed by every man, who has acquired eminence in the practical business of life; or who has ever made any great discovery in the arts or sciences,—except, perhaps, in a very few cases, where discovery has been the result of happy accident. It is this perseverance in studying into the nature of things, in unfolding their complicated tissues, discerning their minutest relations, penetrating to their centres, that has made such men as Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Franklin, Watt, Fulton, Sir Humphrey Davy, and Dr. Bowditch.—men, the light of whose minds is now shed over all parts of the civilized world, as diffusely and universally as the light of the sun, and as enduring as that light. And so it is in all the other departments of life, whether higher or humbler;—not more in the case of the diplomatist, who is appointed an ambassador to manage a difficult negotiation at a foreign court, than in that of the agent, who is chosen by a town, because of his good sense and thorough knowledge of affairs, to conduct a municipal controversy. It is to such habits of thought and reflection upon the actual relations of things, as they exist, and as God has constituted them, that we are indebted for the men, who know how to perform, each day, the duties of each day, and in any station, the duties of that station;—men, who, because of their clear-sightedness and wisdom, are nominated as arbitrators or umpires by contending parties, or whose appearance in the jury-box is hailed by the counsellors and suitors of the court;—men, whose work has not to be done over again, and whose books or reports do not need *erata* as large as themselves."

Conversation augments pleasure, and diminishes pain, by our having sharers in either; for silent woes are greatest, as silent satisfaction least; since sometimes our pleasure would be none but for telling of it, and our grief insupportable but for participation.

—*Wycherley*.

The way to cure our prejudices is this, that every man should let alone those that he complains of in others, and examine his own.

—*Locke*.

## DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL.

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GENEVA, N. Y., JUNE 1, 1840.

Vice we can learn of ourselves; but Virtue and Wisdom require a tutor.—SENECA.

We are not debating now whether or not the people shall be instructed—that has been determined long ago—but whether they shall be well or ill taught.—LORD BROUGHAM.

## TO OUR READERS.

We are happy to announce that the JOURNAL is established, and will hereafter appear regularly on the first of every month. In addition to the important Decisions and Communications of the Superintendent, articles from some of the ablest writers and most successful teachers in the country will constantly grace its columns, treating on all the great questions involved in the science of education, and diffusing the hoarded results of long experience and careful study. We need not add that no labor will be spared on our part to realize the hopes of the friends of the great cause. For while we are encouraged by the generous support already given, we feel that it brings with it an increasing weight of obligation which untiring zeal will alone enable us to sustain.

We have reduced our terms in the hope of gaining a wider circulation, and accomplishing more general good. In many towns copies have already been taken for every district school, while a distinguished friend of general education, has authorized us to send one copy to every clergyman in his county. These and similar acts of confidence in the usefulness of this paper, encourage us to hope, that it may find at least one subscriber in every school district in the State. If in this manner our means should be increased, we shall show our sense of obligation to the public by constantly improving, and enlarging our Journal, aiming at the good of the cause, as the first, great object of exertion.

— We must remind our subscribers that their subscriptions are now due. We venture to forward to those who subscribed at one dollar, two copies, hoping they may find some one to take the extra number. Should not this be satisfactory, we will remit the balance due them.

— The rule that subscriptions must be paid in advance, will be inflexibly adhered to, as the small sum charged makes it absolutely necessary that no hazard should be incurred.

## OUR COMMON SCHOOLS.

We ask attention to that part of the Report of the Superintendent contained in this Journal. It exhibits the annual cost of our Common School system, in a manner calculated to awaken careful and serious reflection. Seventeen hundred and eighty-two thousand dollars annually expended on our Common Schools! And with what effect? Does it provide for the education of our youth, leading them safely in the pathway of knowledge, fitting them to fill usefully and honorably the places of their fathers, and to bear upward and onward the great principles of liberty, virtue and religion? We need not answer the question. From all parts of the State comes the same unwilling admission, that our Schools are “neither what they should be, nor what they might be.” And this admission is often from those, whose own standard of education is not high; who only ask that our Common Schools should make good spellers, readers, writers and arithmeticians, and who, disappointed even in this, have been compelled to seek in the Select School or the Academy for these elements of knowledge, or else to trust to their own or their children’s efforts to remedy their deficiencies. In truth, were it not, that thoughtful and devoted parents impress on earliest childhood their own grave character—

that labor seldom leaves occasion for temptation, and rural occupations, exert powerful and pure influences on the heart and life, there would be little of that intelligence and virtue which we generally attribute to the influence of our Common Schools. They, aided to form the character of our fathers, when the school not only gave impulse but direction to the mind, not only awakened knowledge but principle to control it; and that influence, and not our existing school system, is still the great conservative power which saves society from utter demoralization.

We do not, therefore, rest our hopes for the future on the present condition of our Common Schools, but on what they may and must become. We cherish no Utopian visions; we look for the diffusion of that education, which is possible to all, adapted to all, and necessary to all. That kind of training which leads a child safely, though it can go with him but a few steps in life, and leaves him in the right path.—Whatever is taught, we would have thoroughly understood; the mind should see clearly whatever is the subject of its attention, and though reading, geography and arithmetic, may bound its attainments, it never afterwards will be satisfied with those misty notions and vague ideas, which so often cloud the intellect of those whom courtesy calls educated. Let then a love of knowledge, rather than of novelty, be inspired; let the direction, as well as the activity of the understanding be regarded; let habits of attention, industry, method and obedience be formed, and our children will soon exhibit other and more satisfactory evidences of their improvement, than the number of books they have *gone through*, or of schools they have attended. But a change must first take place in the public mind. The vast sum annually spent on our schools must be less thought of, and the little corresponding benefit, more. Not, that there are not many good Common Schools, but that a vast majority are utterly unfit for any purpose but to dishearten the friends of thorough teaching. And this is noticed and commented on, until many of our best citizens turn with indifference from the Annual Report, which exhibits the extending and deepening interest in education, as if they distrusted all evidence in favor of this great cause. Religious organizations, temperance societies, Young Men’s Associations, Colleges, Academies, &c. &c., are looked to, by one and another, according to their varying character, as means of rectifying public opinion, diffusing knowledge and renovating public virtue; while our Common Schools, which stand on every way-side, teaching *well or ill*, and affecting the weal or woe of millions, are neglected and forgotten. Let all, however, remember, that it is difficult “for the pulpit to mend what the school has marred;”—that the six-days-preaching will too probably have more influence over the character and life, than the seventh.

But we have a cheerful faith that this icy apathy is slowly breaking up. The general and deep interest taken in our District School Libraries—the elaborate and useful Reports of the County Visitors—the important Bill reported by Mr. King, and passed by the Assembly, are all indications of the increasing strength of the cause. The question is now often and emphatically asked, Why am I compelled to pay fifteen or twenty dollars a year, in addition to my tax for the Common Schools, for the tuition of my children? Why can they not be well taught in the Common Schools? And we ask the Legislator, the voter, the tax-payer—why they cannot be? Why are they not the best schools in the State? They are the people’s schools, and the people, true to themselves, must and will see that they are made so. It is not an answer, that the fund is ample, the Superintendent

\* We shall enrich our pages from these Reports.

able and devoted, shrinking from no toil, and deterred by no difficulty in the path of duty; money *pays* the master, but does not *teach* the child, and the Superintendent has no *praeternatural* power to work reformation. The people must give their hearts to their own great work. Calm and thoughtful investigation will lead on to wise action, and if we may aid in hastening the great result, we ask for no other reward than to share in the common good. We, too, would send our children to the Common School.

REPORT OF THE SUP. OF COM. SCHOOLS,  
TRANSMITTING RETURNS OF DISTRICT LIBRARIES.

The Report, after a brief reference to tables, which we have not space to give, presents the following encouraging statement of the present condition of our Library system.—From which it appears that in a single year nearly as many books have been put in the Libraries of our Common Schools, as have been accumulated in more than two centuries in all the public Libraries of Massachusetts, while actually many more than are accessible to the citizens of that State, have been in this brief period brought within reach of the people. Such is but the beginning of our munificent Library system!—Ed.

“To the Legislature of the State of New-York:

“The grand result is, that during the year there have been 240,968 volumes placed in the circulating libraries, of 6,001 districts out of the 10,694 districts in the State. From other sources of information in the possession of the Department, it is known that there are many districts possessing libraries from which no reports have been received, notwithstanding the efforts made to procure them. But these returns enable us to see that more than one half of all the districts in the State are supplied with libraries.

“It affords great pleasure to be able to state, that with very few exceptions, the selections of books have been judicious. The inhabitants of many districts have entered into the project of supplying books for the perusal of themselves and their children with great alacrity and spirit; and in numerous cases have voluntarily added to the money received from the State a sufficient sum to procure libraries of 50 volumes. The two series published by the Messrs. Harper have been almost universally adopted, particularly the second; an invaluable collection of books that would adorn the private library of any citizen.

“The Superintendent cannot refrain from congratulating the Legislature, and particularly the early friends and advocates of the system of district libraries, upon the signal success of the efforts made for its introduction.

“It was to be expected that a project so entirely new would meet with difficulties; that many would not appreciate its importance; that others would be negligent in executing its provisions; and that others would not understand the duties that devolved on them in carrying it into effect. In many instances the money was not received in time to purchase books; or there was not supply of them before the navigation closed. In other cases, the sum received from the State was so small that the districts preferred waiting for the dividend of this year, in order to make up an adequate sum. In these, and all other cases, except those of wilful disobedience of the law, or palpable and intended violation of its provisions, the discretion vested in the Superintendent by the act of the last session of allowing the library money to be distributed, notwithstanding omissions to comply with the conditions of the statute, has been freely and liberally exercised. No district that has rendered anything like an excuse for not procuring a library, has been refused a participation in the amount distributed the present year.

“The occasion does not require any comments on the inestimable benefits that will flow from placing within the reach of the young, and of every other inhabitant of the State, whatever may be his condition, the treasures of science and literature to be enjoyed without money and without price. The example of our State is properly appreciated throughout the Union, and is stimulating vigorous efforts to emulate it; and the time probably is not far distant when the whole wide extent of our country will be furnished with circulating libraries for the common use of all.

JOHN C. SPENCER,  
Superintendent of Common Schools.  
Secretary’s Office, April 15, 1840.

## ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

## SPELLING.

NO. II.

MR. EDITOR:—In my former communication, I spoke of the importance of this branch of education, and of its receiving early attention. The question occurs, *how can it most successfully be taught?*

In regard to teaching any branch of study whatever, two points are to be considered, viz., how to arouse and quicken the attention of the pupil, and how to present most advantageously the subject matter of instruction.

The first of these I shall briefly consider in this article.

Spelling, in its bare and naked form, seems a dull work, and the mind of the pupil, especially after some advance in age and other knowledge, is applied to it unwillingly. In the freshness of early youth, when the child first begins to spell, the putting together of letters to form words, has the interest of novelty, and I have seen the interest of a child at table, about equally divided between spelling and his breakfast. To be able to spell a word is an achievement; and the mind, not yet grown familiar with the powers of letters, finds a good deal of exercise in that mixture of remembering and working from its little stores, by which the child combines them together to form words. Afterwards it ceases to be a matter of curiosity, and something new is wanted to stimulate the sluggish attention; otherwise, though the lesson may be conned over repeatedly, it will make no impression upon the memory.

In particular cases, various particular expedients may be devised, but this must be left to the talent of the teacher. To seek for methods, universally applicable, is our object. Every one knows, that *attention is necessary to memory*, and that the exercise of *attention* is mainly owing, in the young mind, to the interest which may be awakened. To engage the attention, then, of children in a spelling lesson, we must endeavor to invest it with some degree of *interest*.

I know no way of doing this so effectually as by *spelling matches*.

Let the spelling of a school be managed in the ordinary way, every day in the week but one, *i. e.* by the spelling of a daily lesson in each of the classes. But on that day, let all the spelling lessons of the week preceding, be spelled over as a trial of skill.

I remember the interest which was taken in this exercise when I was a school-boy, and have since had opportunities of noticing it.

The manner, in which it was managed, was this: On Friday afternoon, two of the older boys were allowed to choose sides, and drew lots for first choice. A. then chose the one, whom he considered the best speller, and B. of course, the next best, and thus they proceeded, till all in the school, who were old enough to engage in the exercise, were arranged on one side or the other. The lesson to be spelled was a certain number of columns of Perry's Dictionary, the book we then used. When the spelling commenced, a boy was set up in a conspicuous part of the room to keep the tally. A. was first called up, or as A. had the first choice, B. might begin, to equalize, as far as possible, the chances. He spelled till he missed, and then it passed to the head one of the other side; and words were in the same way put to him till he missed. And thus it passed from one side to the other, till all had been called up and spelled till they missed—the lesson, when gone through with, being repeated, if necessary, and then the tally showed how many words had been spelled on each side. It was usual to commence this exercise early enough on Friday afternoon,

for it to be gotten through with by 4 o'clock, and then the scholars of the winning side were let out, while the others were kept in till the ordinary hour of closing the school.

The methods of managing the details of such an exercise may be varied, as, for example, the pupils all standing up in order on the two sides of the school-room, might take their seats as fast as they missed, and the contest would be decided by the number left standing, after going round a certain number of times.

There is in such a contest sufficient excitement to awaken an active degree of interest and attention, and if made upon the lessons of the preceding week, without any separate allowance of time, for preparation, it would give an impulse to the study of the spelling lesson every day; and besides, would have a tendency to correct the habit of getting a lesson just for the moment. For there is a good deal of difference between learning a lesson to say five minutes hence, and learning it to say a week hence. I have been told by a clergyman, that in the hour's intermission between the morning and afternoon services, he could commit his afternoon sermon to memory, but that, if he wished to preach it the next Sunday, he would have to commit it again.

This plan also gives a weekly review of the spelling lessons, and thus brings the other great means of remembering into play, *viz. repetition*.

Though this method introduces competition, it is not liable to any evil consequences, so far as I can see. The contending parties and those who lead them, are varied each week,—there are no individual conflicts,—and the system of choosing sides, tends to distinguish by the choice of the leaders, those who are distinguished for accurate spelling. No other method, which I have ever seen adopted, can compare with this in efficacy in awaking an interest and producing good spellers.

We have seen something of its effects in the spelling-matches which have taken place between two schools in our village, within a few months. At the last one, I was present long enough to hear, as I reckoned, between three and four hundred words spelled, by about sixty children, and only two of them were missed. Those of us who had seen these schools but a year before, know how vast a change was necessary to such a result. The contest between two schools may ordinarily be objectionable, because they are permanent bodies, and permanent jealousies might result.

It might add to the good effects of such a contest, and give encouragement to the best spellers of the defeated side, if the names of all, who had spelled over a certain number of words without missing, with the number they had spelled, should be read aloud before the whole school, at the end of the exercise; and it would also direct the choice for the next week.

I once attended the school of a teacher, who used occasionally to bring out those of us, who were about equal in attainments, to a similar contest in Arithmetic, and as it seems to me, with much benefit.

SPELMAN.

## READING.

MR. EDITOR:—In the first number of your paper, there appears an article on the subject of Reading, from which I am in hopes you will use your influence, to promote attention to this very important, and too much neglected branch of education. The value of a good delivery has at all times been admitted, when it has been brought fairly under notice, and yet Philip's question might be put now, with as much propriety, to the great majority of our preachers and teachers, as it was of old to the Ethiopian nobleman. Instances without number might be mentioned, to show how

much the effect of a discourse depends upon its delivery. The story of Demosthenes's failure when he first presented himself to the Athenian people, and his interview with Satyrus, in which the player showed the young orator the faults in his delivery, by repeating after him a speech from a Greek tragedy, is known to every body. An equally striking instance occurred lately in our own country: Dr. —, celebrated for a good delivery, during a temporary absence from home, engaged a gentleman to supply his pulpit, and on his return, was very much mortified to find his congregation greatly dissatisfied with the last sermon delivered by his friend. He did not, however, say much about it, but, a few weeks afterwards, preached a discourse which was highly praised: Some of his friends began to draw comparisons between it and the one they had heard during his absence, when they were stopped by the Doctor, who told them it was the same sermon.

To some who have not considered the subject, these accounts may seem incredible; but, let any person who doubts the influence of delivery, hear his own composition, even a letter on the most ordinary business, read by a bad reader, and he will soon be convinced, by feeling an almost irresistible impulse, to snatch it out of his hands and read it himself. So many books have already been written on Elocution, that it might appear sufficient, simply to refer to some of them, to accomplish all that is desired; but I prefer offering a few observations that have occurred to me, in the course of my own experience, as a teacher.

The most frequent errors are indistinct enunciation, and emphasis misplaced, or wholly omitted. The best mode of curing the first of these, might be, to adopt the process described in Dr. Rush's admirable work on the Philosophy of the Human Voice, but as this would occupy more time than could well be spared, in District Schools, I would say that attention to the old adage,

"Learn to read slow, all other graces,  
Will follow in their proper places,"  
will accomplish all that is requisite. The advantage of slow reading cannot be too forcibly impressed on both teachers and learners; as by this means persons are made to sound each word and syllable distinctly; and the ear, if tolerably correct, will compel a just intonation. Attention to this one rule would, I believe, remedy more than half the common faults. On the application of emphasis, it is impossible to say too much, since the whole meaning of a passage will frequently depend on the emphasis laid on one word. Let any person take the few words of our Saviour addressed to the Leper, "I will, be thou clean," and read them as is usually done, either without any emphasis at all, or with the stress on the word *clean*, and the meaning of the text is not conveyed; but let the emphasis be placed on the word *be*, and the idea of command is at once clear, and the sense fully understood. Another sentence, requiring great care, is, "He made *Him* to be sin for us, who knew no sin." This is seldom read correctly,—stress is almost always laid on *us*, and thus the word who referred to *us* instead of *Him*, to which it properly belongs, and the sense is altogether inverted.

Some persons endeavor to avoid giving wrong emphasis, by giving none at all; this arises frequently from diffidence, but is a great error. Such persons never retain the attention of their hearers for any length of time.

I believe the very best mode to avoid the errors I have mentioned, is first to understand what is to be read, and then endeavor to express the sense, as if speaking it from one's self. This should be done, at first, by repeating select passages, separately, until each is fully mastered. Progress thus made, however slow-

ly, will be most likely to be sure. I take the liberty of suggesting, that the teachers of District Schools should be strictly examined, as to their ability to teach Reading, since I am convinced, that if children were better taught to read, they would be fond of hearing each other read, out of school-hours, and parents would often stay at home in the evenings, if their children could read to them good books, in good style. I am also satisfied, that if more attention were paid to the reading in Schools, it would be appreciated; it is not now much insisted upon, because the majority of the people do not know what it is; but let a master once establish a character for making his scholars read well, and he would always be sure of profitable employment. I know of a large school in the neighborhood of New-York, which is always filled with pupils, though it has no particular merit but that of making good readers.

I make no apology for so long a communication, but will even trouble you again on this same subject, if you deem this worthy of insertion in your paper, and shall think myself well repaid, if I am thus instrumental in making one good reader. E.

Mr. EDITOR:—“There has been some discussion respecting the introduction of the Bible as a school-book, but my impression is, that among the friends of education, it can hardly be said there are now two opinions on the subject. When suggested by Mr. Ames, in 1801, the proposition might well have been met with general resistance. We have since that time had forty years more experience of the influence of the Bible; men are past the noon of life, who were children then, and it has got to be rather too late in the day to debate whether the study of the Scriptures is favorable to general morality and happiness. It is degradation to moot such a question; we owe it to our principles, so thoroughly tested, and to the general welfare, to consider the matter as settled, and to scout the idea of bringing it, in any shape, again upon the table.

And this being settled, it follows, of course, that the earlier and more generally our citizens are made familiar with the letter, and imbued with the spirit of the Bible, the better; and as all Christian people, of whatever name, profess to derive their views from the volume of Revelation, there is no room for the operation of sectarian jealousy.”

#### SCHOOL BOOKS.

BY FISHER AMES.

It has been the custom, of late years, to put a number of little books into the hands of children, containing fables and moral lessons. This is very well, because it is right first to raise curiosity, and then to guide it. Many books for children are, however, injudiciously compiled: the language is too much raised above the ideas of that tender age; the moral is drawn from the fable, they know not why; and when they gain wisdom from experience, they will see the restrictions and exceptions which are necessary to the rules of conduct laid down in their books, but which such books do not give. Some of the most admired works of this kind abound with a frothy sort of sentiment, as the readers of novels are pleased to call it, the chief merit of which consists in shedding tears, and giving away money. Is it right, or agreeable to good sense, to try to make the tender age more tender? Pity and generosity, though amiable impulses, are blind ones, and, as we grow older, are to be managed by rules, and restrained by wisdom.

It is not clear, that the heart, at thirty, is any the softer for weeping, at ten, over a story, the point of which turns on a beggar's boy being ragged, and a rich man's son being well clad. Some persons, indeed, appear to have shed all their tears of sympathy before they reach the period of mature age. Most young hearts are tender, and tender enough; the object of education is rather to direct these emotions, however amiable, than to augment them.

Why then, if these books for children must be retained, as they will be, should not the Bible regain the place it once held as a school-book? Its morals

are pure, its examples captivating and noble. The reverence for the sacred book, that is thus early impressed, lasts long; and, probably, if not impressed in infancy, never takes firm hold of the mind. One consideration more is important. In no book is there so good English, so pure and so elegant; and by teaching all the *same* book, they will speak alike, and the Bible will justly remain the standard of language as well as of faith. A barbarous provincial jargon will be banished, and taste, corrupted by *pot-pourri* Johnsonian affectation, will be restored.

We cordially respond to the sentiments of the illustrious AMES, so gracefully introduced by our unknown correspondent, but he leaves a most important point untouched, to which we would briefly call attention; we mean, the *manner* of using the Scriptures. We have too often seen the blundering pupil sulking over his half-read verse, while the upraised rod and the tittering school awaited the issue, to be in favor of using the Bible as a text-book in the lower reading classes. Still worse is the practice of parsing from it, when we have known questions of gender sometimes put by the pupil to his teacher, which shocked even the thoughtless children. It has been, we are aware, used in these ways, from the difficulty of forming a class in any other book; but as good reading books can now be bought for eighteen pence, even this miserable reason should not be urged. Let not then the holiest gift of God be thus desecrated; let us beware of impairing its influence on the opening life; we are something of a Jew in taste on this point, and rather than listen to this thoughtless dinning of the awful Name, should infinitely prefer that a reverential silence alone denoted its occurrence.—We would have the reading of the Bible made privilege instead of a task; the *best classes* alone being permitted to read from it—that its sacred influence may fall unfeebled on the heart. We would also respectfully suggest to teachers the following exercise, already prevalent in some of our district schools. The teacher *opens* the school with a short passage from the Bible; the best readers then continue the exercise by reading a few verses, the other children quietly and reverently listening with their testaments opened before them; and this with a brief prayer to the Father of Spirits for His blessing on the day, opens the morning school. A short hymn sung by the children, closes the same schools at night; and we have never witnessed the happy scene without fervently wishing that every parent in the land might see its blessed influence on joyous childhood.—ED.

#### HOPE FOR SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTION.

NO. II.

Some remarks upon this subject were made in our last, to invite attention to the usual mode of elementary instruction to children, to show that such instruction tended to injure the temper, and to create indifference to improvement; because the exercise of a child's memory upon subjects not clearly comprehended, tends to defer, not only knowledge, but also retards amelioration of the temper, and it is an erroneous idea that knowledge should be communicated to enable the mind at a future day to correct evil propensity, whereas improvement of temper and mind should be a simultaneous operation.

A remedy for the evil of which we now treat, was indicated in our last, that is to say, to apply a rational and acceptable exercise of the memory of children, but that would be only a part of the remedy; to be entire and

successful, it must extend to the amelioration of the temper—nay, it must commence with that amelioration, otherwise the great object of education, moral improvement, would be defeated.

If the natural temper of children be thus morally cultivated at school, and improved during the whole process of other instruction, we may assume that success would have been obtained, and our hope become fruition.

That the School-mistress or master be competent to present that which is intelligible and acceptable to the mind of a child, they, the teacher, must have received a suitable education, and must possess, naturally or from discipline, a suitable temper or disposition of mind; and further, the teacher should be aided by the efforts of parents or guardians, in the domestic circle; and here it must be admitted that the temper and habits of such friends may too often be a sure impediment; such difficulty, however, proves only that the evil which we wish to ameliorate does exist, and it also proves that unless a remedy be applied, the evil will advance to the end of life.

In all this there is nothing new, and it may be said that the discovery of faults in any human system is proverbially easy, and perhaps they had better not be blazoned abroad unless the remedy be practicable, and also be pointed out; the means of Remedy in Elementary Teaching is to be found only in the preparation of suitable Instructors of both sexes.

No proper means have as yet been devised in the State of New-York, by which such teachers can be prepared. It has been attempted by the State to introduce the Normal School, that is, to prepare Teachers by instructing young men in one regular mode. This attempt has failed in its leading principle, namely, the Selection of the Masters for the contemplated (eight) schools, was made from respectable teachers, *then found* in various parts of the State. However easy to *find* so many, and however elevated their attainments, it would have been marvellous, if any two of these could have been found qualified to instruct upon one system, and questionable whether any of these had been instructed in the system of Normal School teaching. It is therefore manifest that if the State of New-York, will pursue a plan to prepare teachers, the instruction must be commenced at one point and upon one system, and from thence to distribute teachers to as many districts as may be found to be practicable; and further, in executing such a plan, it will be indispensable to include a Female Department, and the selection of teachers must have reference to two especial properties, namely, temper and inclination to teach. The details of such a plan, as is here indicated, will be furnished, if the State authorities find it proper to pursue the subject.

J. G. S.

**THE DUTIES OF PARENTS,  
IN REGARD TO THE SCHOOLS WHERE THEIR CHILDREN ARE INSTRUCTED.—BY JACOB ABBOTT.**

The duties which devolve upon parents, in reference to the Schools where their children are to be educated, commence with the first arrangements for securing a teacher. The duty of selecting and engaging a teacher is usually assigned, it is true, to the Trustees; but in a country so thoroughly republican as ours is, such trustees will almost always act in accordance with what they suppose to be the public voice. If, therefore, in their daily intercourse with the various parents from whom they receive their commission to act, they see indications of indifference, or hear remarks implying that close economy is the main thing to be consulted, it will make an impression upon them which will have great influence when they come together to act. On the other hand, if the several members of such a Board perceive that the community feel a special interest in the business, that they are ready to sustain them in effectual measures, and that parents are all looking forward with interest to their decision, and to the arrangements which they are to be the means of carrying into effect, they will be animated and encouraged. They will feel that duties are of some importance, and that they are felt to be of importance by the community around them, and they will accordingly be more circumspect, more cautious, and more efficient in every step they take.

Trustees, in such a country as ours, generally possess far less real power than is usually supposed. It is public sentiment which really decides the individuals commissioned to act in behalf of the community, cannot go much beyond this public sentiment, nor can they safely fall far short of it. In fact, trustees are chosen generally with reference not so much to the particular knowledge they may have in regard to the nature of the business so be entrusted to them, as to their knowledge of the circumstances and views of their constituents. To these circumstances and to these views they are justly expected to conform; so that actual measures in respect to all such subjects as these, are really controlled by public opinion.

Allow us to say, then, to the parents whom this address may reach, that the first duty which you have to discharge in respect to the school, is to feel yourselves, and to do what you can to awaken in others, an interest in it before it is commenced. Converse about it with one another. Assist in making inquiries in respect to a teacher, and show, by the spirit and interest with which you enter into the plan, that you feel it to be of great importance, and that you are ready to sustain any proper efforts for securing the full advantage which the system of public instruction, under the most favorable circumstances, is able to confer. Thus you give the cause an impulse at the outset. The trustees perceive that their action is attracting notice, and is felt to be of importance, and consequently their interest and vigilance are very much increased. Better arrangements are made; they look over a wider field, and make a better selection of a teacher. The teacher perceives, both by the tone of the correspondence, and by the aspect which affairs present on his arrival in the district or village, that the whole community are interested in his work. He has not come to his new station of duty to go through a mere routine, in which nobody is interested, and which he may therefore perform in the dark, with indolence and carelessness. His own interest in his work is quickened by the friendly interest on the part of others, which he sees all around him; and the importance which he sees is attached to his labors by his patrons, magnifies their importance in his own view. This will not only tend to make him industrious and faithful, but it will make his work a pleasure. We all like to do what the community are interested in seeing us do, and there is nothing like being the objects of friendly observation, to animate and quicken and cheer every species of human toil.

II. Make proper efforts, and be willing to incur the necessary expense, to secure the best teacher whom you can obtain. In the selection of a teacher, there is very frequently a great mistake made in overlooking the most important qualification; we mean interest in the young. If a man reads well, and writes a handsome hand, and has made good progress in arithmetic; and if he is gentlemanly in his person and manners, and of good character, many a Board would consider his qualifications complete. Many such men have been employed, and have failed utterly in their attempts at teaching and governing their pupils. The trustees cannot understand what the difficulty is. The first line on the page in the boys' writing-books, looks like copperplate;—but all the others continue,

week after week, as bad as they ever were. The master can solve at once all the hard problems which the older boys bring him, by way of testing his skill, but yet, some how or other, that row of little boys who were entangled in the mysteries of simple Division when he came, are just as much entangled still. There is little improvement in reading;—little order, though there is great severity,—and every few weeks the whole neighborhood is thrown into excitement by the occurrence of some difficulty between the teacher and a scholar,—the parents and their friends insisting that the master is partial, unjust, and cruel, and the master as firmly maintaining that the boy has the most obstinate and sullen temper which he ever had any thing to do with. Thus between the scholarship of the teacher and the ignorance and frailty of his pupils, there is a great chasm, which interest and affection only could close, and unhappily, there is no interest or affection to close it.

But you will ask, how can we know whether any particular teacher possesses, in addition to the proper literary qualifications, this interest in the young so necessary to success? You cannot tell until he has been tried. If the candidate who offers himself for your school, has been a teacher before, spare no trouble and expense in ascertaining what was his actual success in securing the progress of his pupils, his own ascendancy over them, their good will, and a spirit of subordination and quiet within his jurisdiction. If you find that in these particulars he has been successful on actual trial, especially if you find proofs of his having taken a pride and a pleasure in the discharge of his duties, and a personal interest in the pupils committed to his care, spare no expense in securing his services. No money is so well expended as that which is made really to tell upon the moral and intellectual improvement of your children. Many a man who has neglected their interests when they were young, in order that he might save money, or gain money, would gladly in his old age give up all the land, or the bank stock which he had thus acquired, if he could, by that means, repair the injury caused by his neglect, and instead of being harassed by the evil deeds of a wild, vicious, and abandoned man, who was once his child, could be cheered and sustained in his old age, by an industrious, virtuous, and dutiful son. No;—spare no expense, which can be made really to tell upon the moral and intellectual improvement of your children.

III. You can co-operate very powerfully with the teacher whom you shall employ, by taking an interest in his plans and labors, after he shall enter upon his work. In order to do this effectually, consider his difficulties, and the trying nature of the responsibilities which devolve upon him. You yourselves often get out of patience with your children, though they are perhaps but half a dozen under your care, while he has half a hundred. You have only to govern them; he has to govern the whole multitude, and to carry all the individuals forward in their studies at the same time. You are accountable to no human power for your management of your family, but he is responsible to many parents, and has urged upon him from time to time, many wishes, various and conflicting, and finds all around him expectations which it is impossible to fulfil. Parents should consider these things as the inevitable difficulties and trials of the teacher's lot, and to do all in their power, by the sympathy and the interest they feel for him, to mitigate or remove them.

It is very decidedly for the interest of parents, to do all they can to make the teacher's situation agreeable to him, for this reason, viz., his success will depend more upon the pleasure he feels in his work than upon almost anything besides. Teaching and governing your children is not a mechanical business, whose duties are well defined and explicit, so that you can secure the successful performance of them by the cold compulsion of a contract. A spirit of mutual interest and good will, makes any business go smoothly, but it is almost absolutely indispensable to secure success in a work in which the heart is so much concerned, as in the business of teaching. If you have agreed with a man to frame a house, or to get in a certain quantity of hay, or to collect a debt, or to build a bridge, it will make *comparatively* little difference whether you take any special interest in the manner in which he does it or not.

These employments are of such a nature, that a man of ordinary fidelity may be bound by a simple agreement, to attend to them properly, and he will, perhaps, in most cases, attend to them properly, if left to himself. There is a certain standard of faithfulness, well defined and well understood, up to which any man of good character will come almost of course,

and beyond which he cannot go very far, whatever may be the interest he may take in his labor. But if you employ a man to write a Lyceum lecture, the nature of the case is totally different. If he is a man of good character, he will devote a fair proportion of time and attention to it, but above the point to which his general character for fidelity will carry him, there is room for him to rise indefinitely, according as your interest in what he is doing shall awaken and invigorate him. In other words, if a faithful man is executing some mechanical labor, by friendly observation, and interest in his work, you may lead him to do a *little better*, but in intellectual or moral efforts you may lead him to do *twice or three times as well*.—If, while a man is mowing, his neighbors come and look over him, his efforts and success will be increased perhaps five or ten per cent; but if he is writing an oration, and knows that the community are waiting with interest for its delivery, it will increase the spirit and success of his effort a hundred or five hundred per cent. In all business, then, you may quicken the energies of those who are performing it, by friendly observation, but in business in which the feelings or the intellect are concerned, you may double or treble them. An intelligent congregation might almost make a dull minister eloquent, by the application of this simple principle. Let them all come to church punctually,—look the preacher full in the face while he is speaking,—and make his sermon and the sentiments it contains, the subject of friendly conversation during the week. The mind of the preacher would soon feel the impulse. He would see that himself and his performances were brought out into day, and thus the action of minds around him would quicken and invigorate his own.

The influence and the benefit of such friendly observation, are much more powerful and immediate in the case of the teacher than in any other. But let it be remembered, that by friendly observation we do not mean watching the school to discover faults, nor attempting to interfere in its management by advice, and proposals of new plans, or modifications of existing arrangements. This may be right sometimes, though seldom; and at any rate, such an influence is not what we refer to here. It is *friendly observation*,—taking an interest in the plans adopted, visiting the school,—observing its good points, and sustaining and strengthening the teacher's hands.

[To be continued.]

**EDUCATION.**

The CAYUGA COUNTY COMMON SCHOOL SOCIETY met in Auburn, April 30. The first business in order, was the report of the committee on the qualifications of teachers. Salem Town, Esq., chairman of that committee submitted the following, viz:

The committee would simply premise, that the great objects contemplated by all legislative acts, and public munificence, are not only to furnish the means of instruction to all classes in community, but to elevate the standard of education in all our primary schools. To attempt this elevation in the character of those schools, without requiring correspondent qualifications in teachers, would be utterly fruitless. If our children are to be advanced in their acquirements, our teachers must be, in their attainments.

As the laws of the State require Inspectors to certify, that all individuals by them licensed, actually sustain a good moral character, your committee earnestly recommend a strict adherence to that injunction, resting the evidence of such character, on nothing short of personal knowledge, or credentials explicit and satisfactory to the examiners.

In relation to the literary attainments of teachers, your committee would recommend a thorough examination, that shall be well sustained, in the following branches:

1. In Orthography, including the analysis of vowel and consonant sounds, correct spelling, pronunciation and reading, with a due observance of emphasis and pauses.

2. In Arithmetic, comprising Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division, in their compound, as well as their simple forms. Reduction, ascending and descending, in all its applications. Great precision and accuracy should be required, especially in the above rules, inasmuch as all subsequent exercises involve those operations, and all questions, lying within the whole compass of practical arithmetic, are solved by their application.

3. Decimal and vulgar fractions should be well understood.

4. The Single Rule of Three, and Interest, with reasons for the process, and proofs of correctness.

5. English Grammar, so as to be able to parse any

prose sentence with accuracy, and correct false syntax. 6. In Geography, not only in its great outlines, but to bound the States, and answer the more important questions involved in their description, together with a general view of the Map of the World, location of Oceans, Continents, Countries, Rivers, Mountains, &c., as shall indicate a competent knowledge to instruct others correctly.

7. Some general knowledge of the History of our Country, should be required, especially of the American Revolution.

Thus far, your committee consider an examination, well sustained by young ladies, employed in summer schools, should be considered satisfactory. But in the case of all male Teachers, whether employed for summer or winter, your committee would superadd the following branches:

8. That such Teachers be able to parse promptly and accurately, in poetry and blank verse, as well as prose compositions.

9. That they be able to work and demonstrate Duodecimals, and Vulgar Fractions, Discount, Loss and Gain, Fellowship, Barter, and Positions, the Square and Cube Root, and have some general knowledge of Mensuration.

That such Teachers possess a general knowledge of the Constitution of the United States, and of this State.

In all the above named branches, the committee are unanimously of the opinion, that every male teacher should bear a satisfactory examination, to entitle him to a certificate of competent and ample qualifications. No teacher can impart clear and distinct ideas to others, on any subject whatever, unless his own conceptions are clear and distinct; hence, in their view, the importance of such an examination of teachers, as shall in all cases, not only satisfy the Inspectors, they are well versed in the studies, but have such clear notions themselves, as will qualify them to impart instruction, with ease and perspicuity to others.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

S. TOWN, WM. HOPKINS,  
L. SHERWOOD, G. W. MONTGOMERY,  
DR. FOOT.

The report was accepted, and after being ably discussed by several gentlemen present, was unanimously adopted.

Next in order was the report of the committee on text books. This report elicited many spirited and able remarks from various members of the society, and was referred anew to the following committee:

The Rev. Dr. Mills, Hon. Judge Conkling, Salem Town, C. D. Fitch, S. Gilmore, Wm. Hopkins, and Owen Munson, who are to meet on the 2d Tuesday in July.

The following Resolutions were read and adopted: Resolved, That this society shall be auxiliary to the "New-York State State Society for the promotion of Common School education," pursuant to a provision in the constitution of that society.

Resolved, That we are gratified to learn that the State Society has appointed Mr. F. S. Howe to act as their Agent in this, and the neighboring counties, and that we cordially recommend him to the confidence of the friends of education in this county.

Resolved, That we highly approve of the publication entitled the DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL, conducted by Mr. DWIGHT, of Geneva; and do cordially recommend its extensive circulation.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this Society be published in all the papers in this county.

Society adjourned to the last Thursday in September next.—Cayuga Pat. OWEN MUNSON, Sec'y.

#### HINTS TO PARENTS.

BY J. ABBOTT.

Address the mind of the child through the senses, or through those faculties of the mind by which the impressions of the senses are recognized or recalled. In other words, present every thing in such a way that it may convey vivid pictures to the mind. The senses are emphatically the great avenues to knowledge, in childhood, and it is consequently through them that we can have the easiest access. I can best illustrate what I mean, by contrasting three ways of telling the same story.

"A man had a fine dog, and he was very fond of him. He used to take a great deal of care of him, and give him all he wanted, and, in fact, he did all he could to make him comfortable, so that he should enjoy a happy life. Thus he loved his dog very much, and took great pleasure in seeing him comfortable and happy."

This now presents very few sensible images to the mind of the child. In the following form, it would convey the same general ideas, but far more distinctly and vividly.

"There was once a man who had a large, black and white dog, beautifully spotted. He made a little house for him out in a sunny corner of the yard, and used to give him as much meat as he wanted. He would go and see him sometimes, and pat his head, while he was lying upon his straw in his little house. He loved his dog."

Would you give still more point to the story? Let your style be abrupt and striking, and give the reins entirely to the imagination. Suppose the narrator, with a child on each knee, begins thus:

"A man one pleasant morning was standing upon the steps of his door, and he said, 'I think I will go and see my dog Towser.'"

"Now, where do you think his dog Towser lived?"

"I don't know," will be the reply of each listener, with a face full of curiosity and interest.

"Why old Towser was out in little square house which his master had made for him in a corner of the yard. So he took some meat in his hand for Towser's breakfast. Do you think he took out a plate, and a knife and fork?"

"This man was very kind to Towser; his beautiful, spotted, black and white Towser;—and when he got to his house he opened the door and said,

"Towser, Towser, come out here, Towser."

So Towser came running out, and stood there wagging his tail. His master patted him on the head. You may jump down on your hands and knees, and I will tell you exactly how it was. You shall be Towser. Here, you may get under the table, which will do for his house. Then I will come and call you out and pat you on the head," &c. &c.

No one at all acquainted with children need be told how much stronger an interest the latter style of narration would excite. And the difference is, in a philosophical point of view, that the former is expressed in abstract terms, which the mind comes to appreciate fully, only after long habits of generalization; in the latter, the meaning comes through sensible images, which the child can picture to himself with ease and pleasure, by means of those faculties of the mind, whatever they may be, by which the images presented by the senses, are perceived, at first, and afterwards renewed through the magical stimulus of language. This is the key to one of the great secrets of interesting children, and in teaching the young generally. Approach their minds through the senses. Describe every thing as it presents itself to the eye and to the ear. A different course is, indeed, wise; as for example, when you wish to exercise and develop the power of generalization and abstraction,—but generally, when your wish is merely to interest, or to convey knowledge; i. e. where you wish to gain the readiest and most complete access to the heart, these are the doors. You use others after a time, occasionally, for the sake mainly of having them opened and in use.

#### ANECDOTES OF THE ORIGIN OF WORDS.

SECOND ARTICLE.

One of the most remarkable words, as far as origin is concerned, in the English tongue, is *assassin*. In the era of the crusades, this term was introduced into the languages of Europe, being derived from a tribe of murderous fanatics, who infested Asia for several centuries, and who were under the command of a chief, commonly styled the Old Man of the Mountain. To this chief, his followers, deceived into the hope of thereby gaining paradise, paid implicit obedience, recklessly sacrificing their own lives in the execution of his orders, which were almost uniformly death-warrants. This terrible sect, according to some authors, derived their appellation of assassins from Hassan, their founder, and, according to others, from *hashish*, a narcotic herb, which they sometimes substituted for the dagger in compassing the destruction of their victims. More than one of the crusading princes fell beneath the far-extending arm of the old monster of the mountain—for man, such being merits not to be called. And this is the worthy source of our synonyme for a secret murderer.

The very common word *calculation* is to be referred to a curious origin. *Calculus*, the Latin root from which the word is derived, signifies a *stone*, or *pebble*. The connection between a stone and arithmetical computation, is not very clear, but a glance at old customs explains the matter. In a few simple calculations which they had occasion to make, the Romans were obliged to have recourse to a sort of mechanical process, employing pebbles or counters.—Boys were taught this humble art at school, and carried with them, as instruments of computation, a box filled with pebbles, and a board on which these were placed in rows. A table, also, strewn with fine

sand, served both for tracing geometrical diagrams, and teaching the elements of writing; a very primitive contrivance, but universally used throughout the East, even at this day. From these connexions of stones or pebbles and sand with computation, came the word *calculation*. Another word in every-day use with us, namely, *candidate*, had a similar origin in the customs of the Roman people, and has been preserved, through the custom, as in the former case, has been long disused. The root is *candidus*, an adjective signifying *white*, and competitors for offices in

Rome were called by the derivative term *candidates*, because they were obliged to wear gowns or robes of that color, when going round the city, soliciting the votes of the people. The congenial term *cavassing* has an origin not less curious. The word *cavass*, now employed, in one acceptation, to denote woven cloth, at one time signified merely hemp, of which *cavass*-cloth originally was made. Now, the act of preparing or beating hemp for its further uses, was a most laborious employment, the stuff having to be sifted and thoroughly examined by the workers.—Hence the term "to cavass," came figuratively to signify "to sift out or search into," and in this light was applied to the debating or discussing of questions. By carrying the figure still further, *cavassing* was used to denote the examination made by candidates for an office into their chance of success, and, as solicitation generally accompanied such inquiries, the meaning of "cavassing" ultimately came to be "the beginning of votes." What a strange gradation of meanings from the meaning of hemp! Few words have so remarkable a history as the familiar word *bankrupt*. The money-changers of Italy had, it is said, benches or stalls, in the bourse or exchange in former times, and at these they conducted their ordinary business. When any of them fell back in the world, and became insolvent, his bench was broken, and the name of *broken-bench*, or *banc rotto*, was given to him. When the word was first adopted into the English, it was nearer the Italian than it now is, being "bankerout," instead of *bankrupt*.

#### ADVERTISEMENTS.

Two columns of this Journal will be open to publishers for advertising School and District Library Books. For 15 lines or under, first insertion, 75 cents—every subsequent insertion 37 1-2 cents.

HARPER'S SCHOOL DISTRICT LIBRARY.  
INCORPORATING HISTORY, Voyages and Travels, Biography, Natural History, the Physical Sciences, Agriculture, Manufactures, Arts, Commerce, Belles Lettres, the History and Philosophy of Education, &c.

Extract of a letter from his Excellency GOVERNOR SEWARD, dated Albany, October 30, 1839.

"I am satisfied the works you have selected are admirably adapted to the purposes for which they are designed. Many of them have an established fame, and the talents and learning of the authors are a sufficient guarantee for the excellence of the others. I sincerely hope that the books may be extensively introduced into the school districts, and that your very laudable efforts may be crowned with success."

From Gen. JOHN A. DIX, formerly Secretary of State and Superintendent of Common Schools.

Messrs. Harper, Albany, Nov. 12, 1839.  
Gentlemen: I have carefully examined your second series of the School District Library, and am exceedingly gratified that it meets so fully the object in view—that of disseminating "works suited to the intellectual improvement of the great body of the people." I consider the collection highly judicious; and, taken in connexion with the first series, it constitutes a more valuable selection of books for library than any other of the same number of volumes of which I have any knowledge. I sincerely hope that may find its way into every school district in the State.

I am happy to perceive that you have a third series in preparation, and I take great pleasure in bearing testimony to the zeal with which you embarked at an early day, and have since continued to persevere, in an enterprise of so much importance to the school districts of this State.

I am, very respectfully yours,

JOHN A. DIX.

NEW YORK.—The subscriber has just published and offers for sale, at wholesale and retail, "Elements of the Philosophy of Mind, applied to the Development of Thought and Feeling," by Mrs. ELIZABETH RICORD, late Principal of the Geneva Female Seminary—498 pp. 12 mo.

The work is divided into four parts, and treats, 1st, Of the existence, nature, and destination of the Soul: 2d, Its power of acquiring, retaining and using knowledge: 3d, Its capability of enjoying or suffering, arising from its relation to surrounding objects, and to other beings: 4th, Its moral responsibility.

In this work, the leading facts of Mental Philosophy are so illustrated from the records of History and Biography, as to render the whole subject instructive and pleasing.

Truth, as it is found in Reason and Revelation, has been sought and applied to the development of the thoughts and feelings of the soul. The interesting applications of the leading facts of Intellectual Philosophy to the use of teachers and others, concerned in the education of young persons, and their excellent moral and religious tendency, constitute the chief value of the work. Orders promptly executed.

Geneva, June 1, 1840. 32 JOHN N. BOGERT.

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